



CONNECTICUT POLICE CHIEFS ASSOCIATION

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Testimony to the Judiciary Committee

March 9, 2011

Chiefs Anthony Salvatore & James Strillacci, Connecticut Police Chiefs Association

The Connecticut chiefs support HB #6368, AAC Return of Stolen Property. Currently police must seize and hold as evidence stolen property valued over \$250, though it is seldom needed as evidence by the court; property of less value may be returned to the owner. The requirement:

- Deprives the rightful owner of the property until the court orders its return.
- Requires an officer making a routine misdemeanor larceny arrest to log and inventory evidence, keeping the officer off the street longer.
- May add to police overtime cost.
- Makes police responsible for storing and accounting for this evidence.

The General Assembly raised the property-value thresholds on degrees of larceny in 2009 (P.A. 09-138), the threshold on holding stolen property as evidence has not changed since 1985 (P.A. 85-263), from \$50 (1976) to \$250. This bill raises the threshold to \$500 (the Larceny Fifth threshold) which is reasonable.

We oppose SB #954, AAC Electronic Recording of Custodial Interrogations, which would make in-custody statements in capital, A, and B felonies inadmissible unless videotaped. It would exclude on purely procedural grounds voluntary and truthful admissions—and any information or evidence gained thereby—without any consideration of their validity. It would let guilty persons escape justice.

We do not object to this body supporting promising police practices. The Division of Criminal Justice and selected police agencies have been recording suspect interviews in a pilot program. Early results are positive, and several police departments are starting recording on their own initiative, including ours.

Other agencies may be deterred by the cost-- to prepare an interview room, buy and install cameras, microphones, wiring, storage and retrieval devices, and train personnel. Transcription, if required, is quite expensive. Funding would encourage more departments to participate.

We oppose HB #6344, AAC Eyewitness Identification. Many of its provisions are redundant; Connecticut police and prosecutors adopted measures to remove suggestion from identification procedures in 2005. The provisions not adopted then were excluded intentionally.

We omitted the "blind" administrator for a line-up because in smaller departments, or in the case of a notorious crime, it may be impracticable to find an officer who doesn't know the suspect.